



## NEWS RELEASE

### **For Immediate Release**

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## **Infant Immunization Week Kicks Off with National Award**

**(Salt Lake City, UT)** – First Lady Jacalyn S. Leavitt kicked off National Infant Immunization Week, April 13-19, announcing that Utah is the “Most Improved State” in the nation for two-year-old child immunization levels. The national award was presented to the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at a recent immunization conference in Chicago.

Since 1999, Utah immunization levels increased 8.5 percent for the basic series of shots for two-year-old children, placing Utah above the national average (73.1%) at 74.3 percent. The successful immunization efforts moved Utah ahead of 21 other states. Previous rankings placed Utah at 66 percent or 47<sup>th</sup> in the country. Now Utah is in 26<sup>th</sup> place in national rankings with other states.

“Utah has made significant improvements increasing infant immunization levels since 1999,” says Mrs. Leavitt. The first lady credits several reasons for Utah’s improvement, including reminder cards from health care providers, greater access to immunizations throughout the state, and the growth of the Utah Statewide Immunization Information System (USIIS), a computerized system that maintains immunization records. USIIS has more than one million patient records representing about 83 percent of all Utah children up to six years of age who have two or more immunizations recorded in the database.

“Although disease levels are at all-time lows and immunization levels are higher than ever before, the potential for outbreaks still exists,” says Scott D. Williams, UDOH Deputy Director. As recent as 1999, Utah reported approximately 300 cases of pertussis.

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Each year, about 48,000 children are born in Utah, and children need 80 percent of their immunizations during their first two years of life to protect against disease, disability, and even death. “It is important that we continue to implement proven strategies to maintain and increase immunization levels,” Williams added.

The first lady made her announcement at a “Boost ’em Before You Buckle ’em” event in recognition of National Infant Immunization Week, April 13-19. The immunization Care-A-Van and the Utah SAFE KIDS Coalition were on hand to offer free immunizations and car safety seat education to families in attendance. Public health educators stressed the important preventive role immunizations and car safety seats play in protecting children against infectious diseases and injury.

Counties and local immunization coalitions across Utah will stage other “Boost ’em Before You Buckle ’em” events throughout the week of April 13-19 in childcare settings, Women, Infant and Children (WIC) clinics, community health centers, schools and health departments.

For more information on immunization, call the Utah Immunization Hotline at 1-800-275-0659. For information on “Boost ’em Before You Buckle ’em” events, contact the Utah Immunization Program at (801) 538-9450 or your local health department.

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